

## What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

When a pregnant woman has a drink, so does her baby. Alcohol can harm a developing baby and cause a lifelong disability called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD is a term used for a range of birth defects and brain damage caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol.

There is no cure for FASD.



## Together we can help give every baby a healthy start.

Learn more about alcohol and pregnancy.

Zero alcohol means zero risk for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). If you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or breast-feeding, no alcohol is best. If you are a father-to-be, friend, or relative of a pregnant woman, you can make a difference by being aware of FASD and helping her stay alcohol-free.

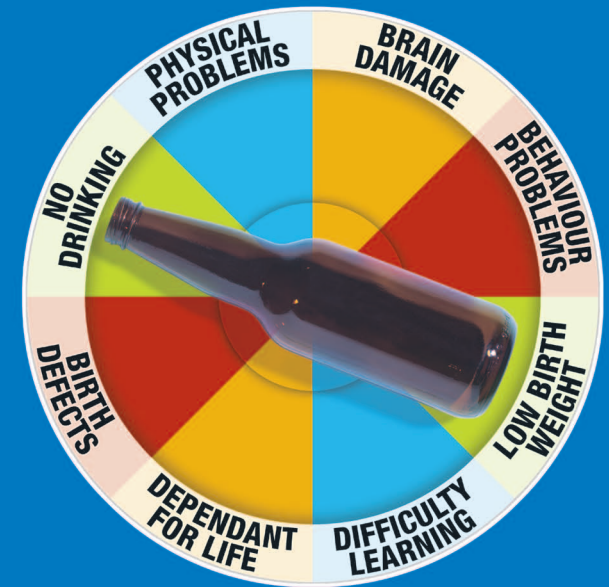
For more information, visit [www.child.gov.ab.ca](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca).  
For help, call 1-866-33AADAC (332-2322).

### Did you know?

FASD is everyone's problem,  
and everyone can help prevent it.



# Pregnancy and alcohol?



## Don't take the chance.

YOUR DECISION  
BABY'S FUTURE

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## Why should women not drink alcohol during pregnancy?

Because an unborn baby's brain and other organs develop each day throughout a woman's pregnancy, there is no safe time to drink alcohol. Alcohol affects each baby differently and may result in an irreversible condition called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). People with FASD can have a combination of unique physical, development, learning, and behaviour problems. These problems don't go away. A baby with FASD grows up to be an adult with FASD.

### Physical Problems:

Babies with FASD may look different than healthy babies. They are often born small, grow slowly, and stay smaller than other children the same age. They may have small heads, and their brains may grow more slowly than usual too. They may have problems seeing and hearing. FASD can also cause defects in a baby's heart, skeleton, kidneys, and other internal organs.

### Development Problems:

Babies with FASD usually reach milestones later than normal. They may take longer to learn how to feed, walk, talk, and even play with toys. They may have trouble with coordination, which makes it harder to learn shapes, sort objects, and move things around. Often these babies also have problems eating and sleeping.

### Learning Problems:

Babies with FASD may grow into children with learning difficulties, short attention spans, and problems remembering things. They can have trouble talking, sharing thoughts and feelings, reading, and understanding what they are told. They may have poor math and problem solving skills and have trouble following directions.

### Behaviour Problems:

Newborns with FASD may be cranky and have problems bonding with caregivers. Later on they may have trouble learning from their experiences, and judging situations. Their behaviour can be hard to predict. They can be reckless and get angry and frustrated easily, and may not cope well with change.

## How can FASD be prevented?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) has only one cause - drinking alcohol during pregnancy. It is 100 per cent preventable if a pregnant woman does not drink.

The effects of alcohol on a baby depend on many things. Researchers don't have all the answers yet. The effects depend on how much alcohol was drunk during pregnancy, and how often, the stage of the pregnancy when the drinking happened, and exactly how the bodies of the mother and baby each react to alcohol.

Here's what we know for sure: **FASD is permanent.** There is no safe time to drink during pregnancy. There is no cure for alcohol-related birth defects and brain damage, and the harm lasts a lifetime. So why take the chance?

### Did you know?

**One serving of beer, wine, and hard liquor all have the same amount of alcohol.**

If you are planning a pregnancy, are pregnant, or are breast-feeding, avoid alcohol of any kind. Beer, wine, and hard liquor all have alcohol and can all harm an unborn child.

There is no "safe" amount of alcohol. There is no "safe" time to drink during pregnancy.

If you are a father-to-be, friend, or relative of a pregnant woman, you can help by supporting her healthy choices and encouraging her to get help if she needs it.

### Did you know?

**Any alcohol during pregnancy might harm your baby.**

## Who is affected by FASD?

We all are affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) - it is a lifelong condition that affects the individual, the family, and the community.

FASD is the leading cause of preventable birth defects and mental disability in Canada. Over a lifetime, each individual with FASD will need about \$1.0 million in special care and support services.

### Did you know?

**FASD only has one risk factor: drinking during pregnancy.**

Everyone can help prevent FASD. Partners, friends, and relatives can make it easier for a pregnant woman by not drinking around her, offering her non-alcoholic drinks, and encouraging her while she goes alcohol-free.

## What if I'm pregnant and have been drinking?

It's never too late to make healthy changes. Now that you know the facts about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, you can make choices that can help give your baby the best possible start.

If you find it hard to stop drinking, there is help available. Talk to your doctor, contact AADAC or your local health clinic. Research shows that even reducing your drinking is a step in the right direction.

### Did you know?

**Your choices count throughout pregnancy. No matter when you stop drinking, you reduce the chance of harming your child.**

